

New River Gorge National River General Management Plan Newsletter

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Dear Park Neighbors, Visitors, and Other Interested Parties:

In the past few months the National Park Service (NPS) has invited the public to help with preparation of the new General Management Plan (GMP) for New River Gorge National River.

The NPS has held two series of public meetings in the park's gateway communities. At these meetings we asked for your ideas and comments regarding what you value about the park, what your vision is for the park's future, and what issues you think should be addressed in the GMP. We also shared with you the NPS's draft of the park's Foundation for Planning, including statements of the park purpose, significance, and fundamental resources. General findings from these meetings are summarized in this newsletter.

In the second week of May, the NPS will hold the third series of GMP public meetings. These meetings will focus on the analysis of the park's resources and the opportunities for visitors to experience the park. They will also focus on the analysis of resources and experiences at the site of the former Nuttallburg Mine and town, as part of the preparation of the Nuttallburg Implementation Plan that is being prepared at the same time as the GMP.

Please take some time to help us plan for the future and come to one of the upcoming three meetings to be held in Hinton, Beckley, and Fayetteville. You will find meeting dates, times, and locations for the initial set of meetings on page four of this newsletter.

Sincerely,

Calvin F. Hite
Superintendent
New River Gorge National River
Gauley River National Recreation Area
Bluestone National Scenic River



What do You Value about New River Gorge National River?

The NPS asked the public to answer this question in the January 2006 GMP public meetings. Here are the most frequently expressed values:

What Values the Public Expressed Most Frequently:

- access to diverse outdoor recreation opportunities (especially hiking, fishing, hunting)
- historic resources and stories
- opportunities for peace and solitude

What Values the Public also Frequently Expressed:

- scenic beauty
- the river and clean water
- wildlife
- economic development opportunities
- educational opportunities



New River Gorge National River – Park Purpose

Park purpose statements clarify the specific reasons why New River Gorge National River was established.

The purposes of New River Gorge National River are to:

- conserve and enhance the free-flowing New River, its gorge, and the adjoining Appalachian Plateau, and their outstanding geologic and hydrologic features, terrestrial and aquatic wildlife communities, historic and archeological resources, cultural heritage, and scenic character
- provide public understanding and appreciation of the park's natural, cultural, and scenic resources and values

New River Gorge National River – Park Significance

Park significance statements are statements of why, within a national, regional, and NPS systemwide context, New River Gorge National River's resources and values are important enough to warrant national park designation.

The significance of New River Gorge National River and the related fundamental resources and values are as follows:

1. Flowing water is the definitive creative force of the New River Gorge. The New River, one of the oldest rivers in the world, continues to sculpt the longest and deepest river gorge in the Appalachian Mountains.
2. The waters of the New River system contain a mosaic of hydrologic features and aquatic habitats, support a unique aquatic ecosystem, and nourish a riparian zone that supports rare plants, animals, and communities.
3. New River Gorge National River lies at the core of a globally significant forest, contains the most diverse flora of any river gorge in central and southern Appalachia, and provides essential habitat for endangered mammals and rare birds and amphibians.
4. New River Gorge National River contains a large, outstanding, and representative group of historic places that testify to the experiences of those diverse people who settled and developed this part of Appalachia between the 19th and mid-20th centuries.
5. Broad views of unbroken forest, steep gorge walls, and a river both tranquil and turbulent are punctuated by pastoral landscapes and industrial ruins to produce dramatic and vivid views from the river, along trails and rural roads, and from rocky overlooks.
6. New River Gorge National River affords exceptional opportunities for exploration, adventure, discovery, solitude, and community.

Major Issues and Concerns Most Frequently Expressed by the Public during General Management Plan Public Involvement Activities

Park Access (roads, parking, trails)

- poor road access to and through the park limits where visitors can go and the experiences they can have
- roads are subject to damage and are expensive to maintain
- closure of Glade Creek Road has eliminated access to a major visitor use area used by many types of visitors
- the demand for parking exceeds capacity at many visitor use sites (particularly at river accesses)
- few developed trails are available for hiking, biking and riding
- active railroads are barriers to accessing the river

Visitor Facilities

- many park visitors would like enhanced facilities and/or new day use areas for their activities developed in the park
- facilities for different types of visitors are not balanced
- the small number of non-designated primitive campsites does not provide camping opportunities desired by many visitors
- non-designated primitive camping can lead to resource degradation and visitor conflicts
- comfort stations are not available in many visitor use areas
- handicapped visitors would like better access to the park

Visitor Experience, Visitor Use, Visitor Orientation

- many stories about the park's cultural and natural resources – if told – would greatly enhance the visitor experience
- visitor crowding is occurring in some areas of the park
- traditional use in the park desired by some and not others – opportunities for hunting elsewhere are diminishing
- new recreation activities may be inappropriate in a national park
- ATV use is a desired use by some but is not legal in the park
- visitors find it difficult to find their way to and around the park
- visitors frequently do not know when they are in the park

Natural Resources

- pollutants entering the New River and its tributaries upstream of the park cause poor water quality conditions in the park
- park visitors contribute wastewater flows to the river that exacerbate already existing poor water quality conditions
- the park's forest is threatened by air pollution, exotic pests, fragmentation, and non-native species
- the park's wildlife is threatened by forest fragmentation, new development, deer, and

non-native predators

- some traditional subsistence lifestyle uses threaten resources

Cultural Resources

- natural deterioration, vandalism, lack of maintenance, weather, and/or lack of occupancy threaten loss of many of the park's remaining cultural resources
- management plans are needed for the park's cultural resources
- poor access restricts or prohibits access to many cultural resources in the park
- important stories about the region's cultural heritage are not being told and are in danger of being lost
- archeological resources in the park are not documented

Scenic Resources

- new development within the gorge and on the rim threatens the scenic character of the park's viewshed
- disagreement exists regarding the definition of the park's viewshed
- many scenic viewpoints in the park are currently not accessible
- air pollution, dust, fire, traffic, and wood-burning threaten the park's natural visibility
- non-native plants, road and bridge construction, and changes to the cultural landscape also threaten the park's scenic character

Land Use

- the recent dramatic increase in proposed residential development within and adjacent to the park has the potential to adversely affect park resources and visitor experience
- other private investment inside the park that could adversely affect the park includes new gas well development, utility construction, and logging
- local land use policies and regulations do not adequately protect park resources from the impacts of new development
- active railroads constrain visitor access to the river

Park Boundary and Land Protection

- the park boundary does not protect significant natural and scenic resources from the potential adverse effects of adjacent land development and development within the park's viewshed
- the park boundary needed to protect its scenic resources varies depending upon how the park's viewshed is defined – the viewshed can be defined from many different vantage points
- continued private ownership of inholdings within the park has the potential to expose park resources and the visitor experience to adverse effects

What are the most important issues that should be considered in the GMP?

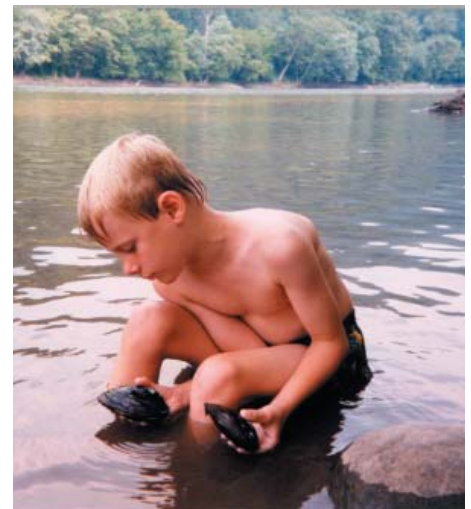
In small facilitated group discussions – during the second round of GMP public meetings – the public answered this question.

Water quality emerged as the single most important issue identified by the public. This is the only issue that all nine discussion groups ranked as one of the top three issues to be considered in the GMP.

Three additional issues ranked among the top three most important issues identified by the discussion groups:

- few developed **trails** are available for hiking, biking, and riding
- **new residential development** adjacent to and within the park boundaries could adversely affect park resources and the visitor experience
- the **park boundary** does not protect significant natural and scenic resources from the potential effect of new development

The need for additional **camping facilities** in the park – while not ranked among the most important issues – was noted by many meeting participants as an additional issue to be considered.



Clean water is essential to providing safe visitor experiences and to sustaining aquatic habitats

Major Issues and Concerns Most Frequently Expressed (continued)

Park Operations

- park maintenance is inherently difficult and costly due to the park's size, its linear configuration, and poor access
- littering and dumping is a problem in many areas of the park
- more patrols are needed to better enforce park regulations
- multiple emergency responders have jurisdiction in the park making emergency response coordination difficult
- disagreement exists regarding guide licensing requirements
- disagreement exists regarding user fees and reservations
- special use permit requests are frequently inappropriate

Economic Development

- economic development goals can best be achieved through a cooperative effort by regional economic development entities
- a shared vision for the future of the region and a plan for marketing the region is needed to accomplish that vision
- the park should be recognized as an important economic generator in the region
- support from NPS is needed for economic development projects
- some people have suggested that a "great lodge" be developed as a regional attraction in or near the park

Gateway Community Relations

- local community planning and land development policies directly and indirectly impact park resources and visitor experiences
- the benefits of the national park are not widely understood or appreciated
- people often do not understand that NRGNR is a national park and confuse the NPS with other public management agencies
- respect for the park and appropriate land stewardship is not always evident in the local community
- some feel that NPS has restricted their use of land in the park

Partnerships

- the park currently has no "friends" group or pool of volunteers to help support its operations
- partnerships with state agencies – such as Hawks Nest State Park – could help accomplish mutual goals
- the park currently does not partner with the biking and hiking community on trail building within the park
- trail connections outside the park could be better accomplished by partnering with state agencies, trails organizations, private landowners, and adjacent communities



Development within the park's viewshed threatens to adversely affect the park's scenic character



River access facilities are often crowded



Cultural resources and stories of the region's cultural heritage are in danger of being lost



More cooperation between NPS and its gateway communities would benefit the park and its neighbors



**National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior**

New River Gorge National River
P.O. Box 246
Glen Jean, WV 25846

**New River Gorge National River General
Management Plan and Nuttallburg
Implementation Plan**

Who is on the Planning Team?

The Planning Team consists of the Park Superintendent, park staff, and technical specialists from the National Park Service's Northeast Regional Office. Wallace Roberts & Todd, LLC, and ICON architecture, inc. are private contractors that are assisting the National Park Service with the planning process. The Park Superintendent and the Director of the Northeast Region of the National Park Service will be the decision-makers in the planning effort. The Planning Team will coordinate with appropriate state, federal, and local agencies.

Public Meetings

The National Park Service has scheduled the third set of public meetings for the new General Management Plan for New River Gorge National River!

Tuesday, May 9th, 2006 from 7 – 9 PM

New River Gorge National River
Sandstone Visitor Center
Located off Interstate 64 (Exit 139), north of
Sandstone, West Virginia

Wednesday, May 10th, 2006 from 3 – 5 PM

Tamarack Conference Center
One Tamarack Park (on Exit 45, Interstate 77)
Beckley, West Virginia

Thursday, May 11th, 2006 from 7 – 9 PM

New River Gorge National River
Canyon Rim Visitor Center
Located off U.S. Route 19, just north of the
New Gorge Bridge

**New River Gorge National River
General Management Plan and Nuttallburg Implementation Plan
Newsletter 2, May 2006**

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How to be Involved:

The National Park Service appreciates your comments on the GMP planning process. We ask that you please provide your comments at the public meetings, or you are invited to respond in writing or by electronic mail.

In Writing:

Calvin Hite, Superintendent
New River Gorge National River
P.O. Box 246
Glen Jean, WV 25846

By Email: Direct your web browser to:

<http://www.nps.gov/neri> Click on General Management
Plan (left side of web page). Then click on Documents and
Links to comment.



GMP Step	Timeframe	Planning Activity	How You Can Be Involved
1	Summer 2005	Initiate GMP: Assemble and gather background information, customize planning process, and establish contacts with participants	
2	Fall 2005 - Winter 2006	Define GMP Planning Context and Foundation and Planning Issues and Project Scoping: Affirm the park's purpose, significance, interpretive themes, and fundamental and other important resources and values; identify issues and concerns	Review Newsletter 1 Participate in Public Open Houses 1 and 2 Send us your ideas and comments
3 We are Here	Winter - Summer 2006	Develop and Evaluate Alternatives: Analyze park resources and values. With NPS staff and public input identify a range of reasonable alternatives for the park's future; assess the effects of alternatives; select a preferred alternative	Review Newsletters 2 and 3 Participate in Public Open Houses 3 and 4 Send us your ideas and comments
4	Winter 2007	Prepare and Publish Draft Plans: Prepare and publish draft documents that describe the alternatives and impacts of implementing each; based on impacts and public input, a preferred alternative is identified in the draft GMP and draft Implementation Plan	Review draft GMP and Implementation Plan Participate in public open houses Send us your ideas and comments
5	Spring 2007	Revise and Publish Final Plans: Analyze public comments; prepare responses to comments; revise and publish final GMP; distribute to public; prepare and issue Record of Decision (for GMP) and Finding of No Significant Impact (for Nuttallburg Implementation Plan)	Review Final GMP and Implementation Plan, including NPS responses to substantive public comments and official letters
6	2007 and beyond	Implement the Approved Plans: As funding allows, implement the GMP and the Implementation Plan	Work with the park to implement the GMP and the Nuttallburg Implementation Plan, as funding allows